THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) to (c) No such proposal to slash the prices of bulk drugs is pending with the Government, at present, where bulk drugs are being sold at much higher price than the notified rates.

Price studies with regard to bulk drugs is an on-going exercise. Prices notified are the maximum selling price. Cases of over-charging, whenever noticed are being dealt with under the provisions of the DPCO and the Essential Commodities Act.

The prices are reduced suo-moto by the Government whenever it comes to notice that the input costs have substantially decreased, for instance, whenever, customs duty rates on raw materials/intermediates are reduced, corresponding reduction in the price of the said bulk drug (final product) is also undertaken.

Damage of Crops Due to Gall Pest in Kerala

906. SHRI T. GOVINDAN : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received any request from the Government of Kerala for the financial assistance to the farmers of Kuttanad region whose crops were damaged by the Gall Pest attack on paddy;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government in this regard; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI) : (a) and (b) Sir, the Government have not received any request from the Government of Kerala for financial assistance to the farmers of Kuttanad region whose crops were damaged by the Gall Pest attack on paddy. However, according to information given by the State Government, the affected farmers were assisted using the corpus of the Calamity Relief Fund which is contributed by the Government of India to the extent of 75%. The State Government has released Rs. 2.00 crore for this purpose.

(c) Question does not arise, in view of reply to (a) and (b) above.

[Translation]

Ammonia Plants in India

907. VAIDYA DAU DAYAL JOSHI : Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the number of Ammonia Plants in India are not sufficient keeping in view the demand thereof in the Country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether huge amount is spended for the import of Ammonia; and

(d) if so, the steps taken by the Government for the production of Ammonia in the country?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) to (c) Ammonia is an intermediate for manufacture of all nitrogenous fertilizers. All urea plants are constructed with dedicated ammonia facilities, since carbondioxide, which is a by-product of the ammonia plant, is required to make urea. Any surplus ammonia from such plants may be used for manufacture of NP/NPK fertilizers and various chemicals.

The ammonia production capacity in India is about 118 lakh tonnes per annum. The production of ammonia during 1996-97 was 102 lakh tonnes, of which about 94 lakh tonnes was used for manufacture of urea. About 8 lakh tonnes of indigenous ammonia was used for manufacture of DAP. NP/NPK fertilizers and Caprolactam. The imports of ammonia during 1995-96 were of the order of 9.2 lakh tonnes valued approximately at Rs. 700 crore.

(d) No licence is normally required for setting up of an ammonia plant and any entrepreneur can set up an ammonia plant subject to the locational policy. Two of the fertilizer companies, viz. Fertilisers and Chemicals Travancore Limited (FACT) and Gujarat State Fertilizers Company Limited (GSFC) have taken up projects for production of 900 TPD and 1350 TPD of ammonia to substitute the imports of ammonia and replace obsolete captive capacities.

[English]

Export of Plant Species

908. SHRI A.G.S. RAM BABU : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have imposed any ban on export of plant species;

(b) if so, the names of such plants and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government propose to include some other species of plants in this list; and